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Prohibition in Kansas.

In the year 1880 the electors of Kansas voted upon and approved an amendment to the State Constitution in the following terms:

The manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors shall be forever prohibited in this State except for medical, scientific and manufacturing purposes.

In favor of the amendment 91,874 votes were polled, and against it 84,037. In the following year the Legislature enacted a prohibitory law.

The Royal Commission Enquiry.

In 1893 the Canadian Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic visited several cities of Kansas and examined sixty-five witnesses. They learned that it was difficult to enforce the law in Kansas City, Kan., which is only separated by a river from Kansas City, Mo., where license law is in operation; and that similar difficulty was experienced in Leavenworth on the Missouri River, which is a military post, and has a large foreign population. Notwithstanding these unfavorable conditions, many witnesses testified that even in these cities the law had done very much good. In other parts of the State the beneficial effects of the law of prohibition were strikingly manifest. More than three-fourths of the witnesses examined unhesitatingly testified to the good effects of the law. A number of persons who had opposed the adoption of prohibition, declared that they had been led to change their views by its satisfactory working, and now strongly favored it. The following extracts from the evidence taken are merely samples of many similar statements that were made:

S. M, Gardenshire, of Topeka, Clerk of the District (County) Court, said: We have no criminal business to speak of in this county, and we have not had since the adoption of the prohibitory policy. We have less than four cases on our docket now, in this county of eighty thousand people. We do not average a capital offence per year in this court, and this court has exclusive criminal jurisdiction. We have sent less than twelve men to the penitentiary in the past year from this county for all crimes.

Hon. Mr. Gains, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, said: The effect is grand. In Dickenson County I stood before one of the high schools and asked how many of the pupils had never seen a saloon. Out of an attendance of 140 over 100 of their hands went up in answer; they were young boys and girls who had never seen a saloon. We have a four weeks term of special training for teachers in the summer months in each county, and I have asked as many as 140 or 150 teachers at these assemblages how many had never seen a saloon, and in answer the majority of hands went up. This shows that we have driven the saloon from the State.

Col. James Abernathy, Manufacturer, Leavenworth, said: I believe there is great improvement even right here in Leavenworth, in comparison with the time before the law was passed. I know a great many men who have quit drinking. Although the law has been poorly enforced, I believe a great deal of good has come of it, even here, although this is probably the hardest place in the State of Kansas in which to enforce the law, owing to its peculiar circumstances.

Keeping Cool.

Preceding the visit of the commissioners there had been a great deal of political excitement in Topeka on account of the claims made by rival political parties to the possession of the machinery of government. Thousands of men were congregated from every part of the State. Intense and bitter partisan feeling prevailed. In reference to the condition of affairs at this crisis, Hon. James A. Troutman, member of the house of representatives, made the following statement:

We had in this city for three or four days a very large concourse of people. A great many of them were in an intense state of excitement, and I think it is no exaggeration to say that thousands of them were armed. This street from here to the State House was crowded with people from all over the State, having arms and ammunition in their possession. Meetings were held, and many inflammatory statements were made, and a good many people on both sides were anxious to have some difficulty. But there was a state of sobriety prevailing among the people that was remarkable, and I think that it was that alone which prevented serious difficulty. If open saloons had been in existence here there would have been unquestionably a great many drunken people, and some of them while in that condition might have precipitated a riot, and there is no telling what would have followed.

"Facts, not Opinions."

In May 1892, Sir Joseph Hickson, chairman of the Commission, addressed a letter to Hon. L. D. Lewelling, Governor of Kansas, asking for information regarding state liquor legislation and its effects. In reply he received the following letter:

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, GOVERNOR'S OFFICE,

TOPEKA, 19th April, 1893.

Mr. J. HICKSON, Chairman,
Montreal, Canada.

Dear Sir,—Replying to your letter of the 4th inst., I have the honor to submit the document, "Prohibition in Kansas," which I think covers most of the points required in your letter. Trusting this will be satisfactory, I am yours very truly,

L. D. LEWELLING, Governor.

The full title of the pamphlet accompanying this letter, was "Prohibition in Kansas; Facts, not Opinions." It had attached to it the following certificate:

"TOPEKA, KAN., April 16, 1889.

"We have examined the statement prepared by the president and secretary, and the ex-president and ex-secretary of the Kansas State Temperance Union, upon the subject of prohibition and its results in our state. We find it a fair, honest and true statement of our condition, and we heartily endorse it as such.

(Signed) "LYMAN U. HUMPHREY, Governor,
"WILLIAM HIGGINS, Sec. of State,
"TIMOTHY MCCARTHY, Auditor of State,
"J. W. HAMILTON, Treasurer of State,
"G. W. WINANS, Supt. Public Instruction,
"L. B. KELLOGG, Attorney General,
"ALBERT H. HORTON, Chief Justice,
"D. M. VALENTINE, Associate Justice,
"W. A. JOHNSON, Associate Justice."

The document thus submitted by the Governor is worthy of special note. Its statements, endorsed as they are by high officials, must be accepted as accurate and thoroughly reliable. Among the clear declarations which it makes are the following:

The law is efficiently and successfully enforced. The direct results of its enforcement are plain and unmistakable. We believe that not one-tenth of the amount of liquor is now used that was used before the adoption of the prohibition law.

Our citizens fully realize the happy results of the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of liquor, as these results are seen in the decrease of poverty and wretchedness and crime, and in the promotion of domestic peace and social order—in the advancement of general enterprise and thrift. In our opinion the prohibition law is now stronger with the people than it was when adopted. It has more than met the expectations of its warmest friends. It is steadily winning the confidence and support of thousands who were its bitterest enemies.

This important pamphlet contains many statements made by leading citizens of Kansas, thoroughly qualified to speak authoritatively, and whose testimony even if not endorsed as it is, would still be beyond dispute or cavil. Here are a few extracts from these definite and forcible utterances.

Hon. A. H. Horton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.—With the abolition of the open saloon the vicious habit of treating has passed away. With us, the habitual use of intoxicating liquors is a bar to political preferment, and the saloon is no longer a potential factor in elections. The effect of the passage of the law was immediate. Grocers, bakers and dealers in clothing noticed a change. The money came to them for the necessaries of life that before had been expended for its bane and curse.

Hon. W. A. Johnston, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.—I think that prohibition grows stronger as time passes. It is correct in principle, practicable and highly beneficial in its operation. It is reasonably well enforced in most of the counties of the state, and I believe that by an earnest, determined effort of the officers it could be enforced in every county. I regard it to be as firmly fixed in our political system as free schools and homestead exemptions.

Judge W. C. Webb, (one of the ablest jurors in the state).—I voted in 1880 against the prohibitory amendment. For four or five years afterwards I thought my opinion as to probable results was likely to be vindicated. But it is not so now. Prohibition has driven out of Kansas the open saloon, and has accomplished a vast deal of good—a thousand-fold more than any license law ever did or ever could.

Senator Buchan, of Wyandotte.—I cannot recall a single person who voted for the amendment that would now vote against it, while on the other hand you can find hundreds who voted against it who would now vote to retain it in the constitution. I voted against the amendment and have never been a prohibitionist, but I prefer to cast my lot among respectable, law-abiding citizens as against law-breakers and nullifiers. I believe the state is better for prohibition. Crime has decreased, court expenses have been reduced, communities have been made more respectable, and individuals have been made happier by it.

Congressman Kelly.—No law ever passed has added so much to the comfort and happiness and contentment of the people as has the prohibitory law in Kansas, and the people of Kansas know it. Of all the legislation ever passed in Kansas—and much of it has been good—prohibition is the brightest jewel in her Crown.

Prof. James H. Canfield, of the State University, President National Educational Association.— When I began work in the State University in Lawrence, twelve years ago, every student was obliged to pass thirteen saloons on his way to the postoffice for his daily mail. There is not now a saloon in this city of 12,000 people, nor anything that corresponds to a saloon. The mass of our school children never saw a saloon, and do not know what it means. The moral sense of the community has so risen and has been so tempered that no conceivable conditions or circumstances could ever again make the saloon-keeper or the bar clerk respectable.

Hon. J. W. Hamilton, State Treasurer.—It is well known to my friends that when the prohibition question was first agitated I was an anti-prohibitionist. I did all in my power to defeat the amendment. But I was mistaken then. The prohibitory law has my endorsement, not alone because it is the doctrine of my party, but because I believe it is right. I do not see how any fair-minded man who has lived in Kansas for the past five years can be otherwise than in favor of the law.

Governor John A. Martin was one of the most resolute opponents of prohibition in 1880, but before his death became a firm advocate of the cause—converted by the logic of its success. In his last message to the legislature he said:

There is no longer any issue or controversy in Kansas concerning the results and beneficence of our temperance laws. Public opinion, it is plainly apparent, has undergone a marked change, and there are now very few citizens of Kansas who would be willing to return to the old order of things The change of sentiment on this question is well grounded and natural. No observing and intelligent citizen has failed to note the beneficent results already attained. Fully nine-tenths of the drinking and drunkenness prevalent in Kansas eight years ago have been abolished.

Governor L U. Humphrey, in his annual message to the legislature in 1889, said:

The growth of public sentiment in support of constitutional prohibition in Kansas is steady, healthy and unmistakable. The saloon as a factor in politics, as a moral iniquity, has been outlawed and made a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth, or that part of it within the territorial limits of Kansas.

Later, the same gentleman, writing in answer to a question about prohibition, said:

It is not needed to disguise the fact that there are some cities and towns in Kansas where the law and the constitution are violated. Every penal statute ever enacted has been violated. But you can boldly tell your co-workers that prohibition is neither a farce nor a failure; that the open saloons are outlawed and the vocation of the bar-keeper gone; that *since prohibition was enacted the state has increased in wealth and population and prosperity, and that crime has diminished.* You can join with one of Kansas' purest and ablest citizens, the late Governor Martin, the shadow of whose death still hangs over us, who loved Kansas, and whose memory is, and will for all time to come be held in devout reverence, who said in his last message to the legislature: "I affirm with earnestness and emphasis that Kansas is to-day the most temperate, orderly, sober community of people in the civilized world."

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